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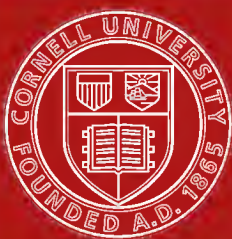
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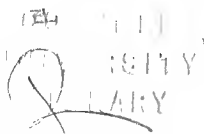
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# GEORGE CLINTON

SOME OF HIS  
COLONIAL, REVOLUTIONARY AND  
POST-REVOLUTIONARY SERVICES

An Address by  
RALPH EARL PRIME, D.C.L., LL.D.  
delivered before  
THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
OF  
NEWBURGH BAY AND THE HIGHLANDS  
March 24, 1903



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# Introductory.



THE following address, by invitation of the Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands, was delivered by RALPH EARL PRIME, D.C.L., LL.D., at a meeting of that Society at Newburgh, March 24th, 1903.

MR. PRIME spent his boyhood days in Newburgh, and introducing his address referring to that fact said :

“As we stand here to-day in this hillside City and look  
“down upon, and over the beautiful bay, which lies at the end  
“of the hill-slope, and at those grand hills over yonder, clad in  
“green in the sunlight, and in deep blue in the shade; a very rock  
“fortress and defence to the middle and upper Hudson River;  
“many are the personal memories that come to some of us. Among  
“the earliest of my recollections is this scene. Across there, in the  
“little Presbyterian parsonage at Mattewan, east of Fishkill Land-  
“ing, I was born. Wonder that it has not long since passed away,  
“as so many of our landmarks go. Brought across the Hudson in  
“arms, here in Newburgh I spent my early boyhood days. I well

“remember, though so far away, in the years that are gone, the  
“romp and play of my childhood on these hillsides. I remember the  
“gardens and the gorgeous lawns of those days, to which I was ever  
“welcomed as a little fellow, and all of which was my boy domain.  
“The old Scotch Church is gone now, with the other vanished  
“landmarks that give way, despite their memories, to the onward  
“ceaseless and destructive march of a so-called better taste, and  
“the demand of improvement, which, with all its merit, is a verit-  
“able vandal, and has no regard for sentiment or memories. The  
“man of God, who, in those days, loyal to his Divine Master, stood  
“in the pulpit of that Church, proclaimed the Gospel of peace, I  
“well knew in my childhood, and continued to know when I was  
“grown to manhood. He was my friend, later became a soldier,  
“and with me served the god of war for a time.”

“Other respected and honored names of those days I have  
“not forgotten, the two Downings, the Monelles, the Rankins, the  
“McCroskereys and others. How well I remember them all; yet  
“they live almost only in memory to-day.”

“I am glad to come back here at this time, and cannot help  
“recalling these recollections of my youth; though our purpose  
“to-day is to recall somewhat of other events, further back than  
“the memories of any of us, and only known as history; events  
“that are inseparable from these scenes we can look upon to-day.”







Law Johnston

# GEORGE CLINTON

SOME OF HIS

COLONIAL, REVOLUTIONARY AND  
POST-REVOLUTIONARY SERVICES

BY

COL. RALPH EARL PRIME

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**I**N presenting any part of the life or doings of any great man, it is difficult, nay impossible, to avoid presenting also other men and other things. What a man thinks and does, what his opinions and impulses are, what his relation to coincident events and affairs, his heredity, his environment, the effect upon him of the opinions and the personality of other men, the influence of all these varied things that happen, and of which he is a part, all these things are so interwoven with the man himself, that in order to get a just appreciation of him, it is necessary to consider them as well. This is peculiarly true in the story of George Clinton, as we shall see. The people among whom he lived, the locality where he lived, the great Hudson River Valley so intimately connected with him in his career, the events and the sufferings of the people, of whom he was a part, during the period that preceded the Revolution, the events of that Revolution itself, all these necessarily have much to do with the life of George Clinton.

It hence will be impossible to the present task, to omit a large consideration of all of these, in attempting to set out something of the place which George Clinton occupied in history, and in order to enable us to judge of his character and of what he did. Therefore, although much will be said about the events of the Revolutionary War and of other men, yet are we in fact dealing with George Clinton.

Many of the events that happened then, though inconspicuous when compared with others, were in fact momentous to us. The

men who acted their part then, have their place in history, though we do not often dwell upon their story. Among them were many who, out of real native worth, wrought great things, and they have come to be historic and to be inseparable from the story of our country and the State. Some of them were specially fitted by nature and by heredity, for their work, and were called of God to it, and of none can this be more truly said than of George Clinton.

This country of ours gives equal opportunity to all, and God forbid the time when the worship of wealth shall so take possession of it that it shall make wealth the symbol of personal worth. Notwithstanding any of our fears, I believe it will never come. But although we endorse the abstract sentiment of our fathers that all men are born free and equal, yet there is an heredity of fitness, which cannot be counted out, and men become trained in long lines of blood and development for the work God has for them to do.

George Clinton came of a line of soldiers and true men. His great-grandfather, William Clinton,<sup>1</sup> was a soldier in the royalist army and he fought for Charles I., in those days that produced the Cavaliers and the Roundheads. Irving gives his name as Gen. Charles Clinton.<sup>2</sup> The King fell and the great Protector came to be the fountain-head of English liberty, at least of that period, and of the freedom which we enjoy with its development, which includes religious liberty. In the fall of that King, the blood was spilled that flowing in his veins meant oppression and repression, but spilled upon the ground it enriched England and fertilized it and gave a new start and an impulse to the growth of constitutional liberty. The triumph of the Roundheads drove out the followers of the King, and William Clinton found refuge in France for a time, but later he went to Scotland.<sup>3</sup> There he married. We know nothing of his religious tendencies, prejudices or opinions before Charles I. fell, but presumptively from his official rank in the army of the King they were toward the establishment. I have before this wondered if by breathing the Scotch Presbyterian air, or perhaps by the influence of a good Scotch wife, there was planted in him, and through him in the line of his descendants, some of the

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1. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15. 2. Irving's Washington; book 2, p. 70.  
3. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15.

stern Calvinistic iron and sinew and spirit which grew and developed and came out to notice in the line of his descendants and in the person of his great-grandsons, James and George Clinton, both of whom, just before the Revolutionary war, were in the Church records of Orange County as District trustees of a Presbyterian Church.<sup>1</sup> The Tory historian, Jones, writing of George Clinton, speaks of him as a "rigid, true Presbyterian," a "hypocrite."<sup>2</sup>

But William Clinton did not escape in Scotland from persecution as a result of his former royalist connections and perhaps his yet treasured loyalty to the memory of the fallen King. It may have been in a degree, a "fool's errand" that begat trouble for him. Even the best men sometimes will talk, and a soldier's life of adventure and danger is full of romance, and of story, and none more than a soldier likes to talk of his campaigns and dangers. He was at all events compelled to seek safety and fled with his wife to Ireland and there soon after died, leaving an only son, James, then only two years old. James married and his son Charles (named perhaps for the King or Prince Charlie) was born to him in County Longford, Ireland, in 1690.<sup>3</sup>

The stories of the strange new things in this then new world across the seas, and the opportunity for adventure, filled the mind and excited imagination and attention in the old world. Perhaps those stories offered gratification of the spirit of adventure in Charles Clinton, then grown to be nearly forty years of age, and created in him desire, and nerved him, in 1729 to organize an expedition of 70 souls and with them to cross the great stormy sea. They sailed in the ship "George and Annie" for America.<sup>4</sup> When we think of the ships of this day, and the ships of those days, what a ship the "George and Annie" must have been! Would we to-day, even the most adventurous of us, trust ourselves in such a craft to cross the now familiar waters?

It is said that their destination was Philadelphia. The voyage was not itself without adventure. The strange actions of the ship's captain begat suspicion among the voyagers and we are told that the company sought to induce their leader, Charles Clinton, to assume command of the ship.<sup>5</sup> We at once imagine he must have already shown among his qualities, fitness to com-

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1. Rittenber's History of Newburgh; p. 299. 2. Jones History of N. Y.; vol. 2, p. 326. 3. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15. 4. Idem. 5. Idem.

mand on sea as well as on land, to have induced such an offer of command. He declined the task however and then the evidently well to do party, by large gifts of money, induced the crafty captain to fulfil his engagement and to put them safely ashore in America, and the whole company bound for a new land were glad indeed to be landed on the shores of Massachusetts Bay,<sup>1</sup> where they tarried until 1731, and then took up a further tramp, and a new stage in their journey, and came to the grand river and beautiful valley of the Hudson, and made their home at Little Britain, then in Ulster County, N. Y.

Charles Clinton, the leader of the colonists, was educated it seems to be a civil engineer. He became a lawyer. Later he was first Judge of his county. The instincts born in him and inherited from his grandfather, with the ever conscious necessity of protection from the savages of the forest, led him also to become a soldier, and they fortified and defended the farms, and later we find him the Lieutenant Colonel of the Militia Regiment of his county. His was no paper title only, for he served the colony with his regiment in the field and was actively engaged in campaigns, far from Little Britain, along the north borders and along the great lake and in the wilderness resisting the French and Indians, who came down from the then French Canada, to ravage the British colony of New York.<sup>2</sup>

Two sons had been born to him, James Clinton and George Clinton, both to write their names high on the historic roll of sons of New York; James as a Major General in the war for independence and from whom sprang De Witt Clinton, a distinguished son, a name not necessary to enlighten a New Yorker about, but the younger son, George, became not only distinguished as a general officer and a soldier, but a most prominently great figure in the early history of the State and the nation and a leader of the people. These two sons, as mere boys, accompanied their father and his regiment in the French and Indian wars, the eldest, James, as captain of one of the regimental companies, and George as a lieutenant, no doubt in his brother's company.<sup>3</sup> They thus early showed themselves as worthy sons and scions of a soldier family, and, as very young fellows, they distinguished themselves, also among their other adventures,

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1. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15. 2. Irving's Washington; book 2, p. 71.  
3. Idem; p. 71.

by capturing an armed French vessel on Lake Champlain.<sup>1</sup> Charles Clinton was a patriot and on his death bed in 1773, being 88 years of age, charged his sons to stand by the liberties of their country.<sup>2</sup> They were born to it and needed not the admonition.

But it is with the story of George Clinton that we have to do to-day.

George Clinton was born at Little Britain, Ulster, now Orange County, July 26, 1739.<sup>3</sup> Adventure was a large part of his story. In 1755, when only 16 years of age, he was for a time a sailor boy and sailed from New York on a privateer,<sup>4</sup> but returning home when scarce 20 years old, as lieutenant he accompanied his father and brother in the same regiment, to the Canadian frontier and Lake Champlain in the French and Indian wars, in the Wilderness, and along Ontario and against Fort Frontenac.<sup>5</sup>

The peace between Great Britain and France in 1763, brought the three Clintons home to peaceful pursuits. George, born to conflict of one kind or another, turned about for occupation most to his taste, and chose the calling of his father. He became a lawyer, and was admitted to the bar in 1764 by Governor Cadwalader Colden,<sup>6</sup> lawyers in those days being licensed by the Governor of the Colony. Strange that when later on he became General Clinton and Governor Clinton he sent the grandson of the same Cadwalader Colden to Kingston Jail as a spy.<sup>7</sup>

Those days did not offer continuous occupation to the country lawyer, and it seems not to have met all the demands of Clinton's nature, and so he added politics to the things that interested him, and thus early in his life came before the people in that line. He became Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas of his county, and engaged in legal strifes generally, and not of his *own*, only. That was a greater place in those days than in these, although there was then less money in it. His father had risen from a legal practitioner, whatever it then was, to the bench, and so also the son, for he soon became Surrogate and Probate Judge of the County,<sup>8</sup> and, according to the practice then, and for long years later, and perhaps in some places until

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1. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 17. 2. Irving's Washington; book 2, p. 71.  
3. Clinton Papers, vol. 1., p. 17. 4. Idem; p. 17. 5. Idem; p. 17. 6. Idem;  
p. 18. 7. Idem; p. 788. 8. Idem; p. 18.

these days, the general adviser of widows and of the representatives of estates of deceased persons. In 1768 he was chosen a member of the General Assembly of the Colony of New York, and sat in that body for seven successive years.<sup>1</sup>

The grievances of the colonies and their complaints, against the then existing kind of British rule, and of taxation without representation had reached abroad and was loudly heard in the mother country. I wonder if such rule was not on the whole for the benefit of the future of our country, for what would have happened we do not know, if the colonies had then been colonies of that "veiled republic" of to-day. But even then the Colonists had their friends in England. Pitt, the great Commoner, espoused their cause. Col. Isaac Barre, in old Westminster Hall, in the sitting of Parliament, in a public speech called the colonists "Sons of Liberty."<sup>2</sup> As the opprobrious epithet "Beggars of the Sea" was adopted by the victorious Dutch sailors who swept the sea and nailed the broom to the masthead and used it for a figurehead on their ships, and made the epithet a title of honor, our ancestors took up those words "Sons of Liberty" and formed an organization, necessarily secret, but which had its members in many American cities and towns, and there are some of us who to-day are most happy to include in our genealogical story a descent from one of the later acknowledged "Sons of Liberty."

Just to enumerate a few only of the grievances of the colonies against British rule : Town meetings were forbidden ; juries

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1. N. Y. Civil List, Ed. of 1888, pp. 311, 312.

2. The words of the speech of Col. Barre in that connection were: "They planted by your care! No; your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated, unhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable; and among others to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle, and I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon the face of God's earth; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those who should have been their friends.

"They nourished up by your indulgence? They grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and another, who were perhaps the deputies of deputies to some member of this house, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions and to prey upon them; men whose behavior on many occasions had caused the blood of those Sons of Liberty to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some who, to my knowledge were glad, by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own."



were drawn to consist only of those who favored the rule of the King and had set themselves against the cause of the colonies ; persons accused of crime were sent to Nova Scotia and even to England for trial ; the stamp act had been enacted and its time of taking effect approached ; the Quebec act was passed, adding all the land west of the Alleghanys to the Canadas ; the billeting act which quartered troops upon the people, a thing utterly unheard of in these days. As we, in these days, look back to those days, we wonder at the accumulating list of wrongs and the increasing oppression suffered by our fathers, and at their long-endured oppression, their patience, and yet their loyalty to legal rule.

A Congress, composed of representatives of nine of the colonies, met in New York October 7, 1765, and strongly protested against the Stamp act and other acts in repression of trade and commerce, and claimed the right of petition, of trial by jury, of taxation only by representatives of those taxed.

The meeting and the action of that Congress demonstrated the possibility of united action by all the separate colonies.

The decade that followed did not serve to ameliorate the conditions nor to reconcile the people, for more and other oppressions came. The tea tax followed. The attempt to quarter troops upon the people and their resistance brought on the Boston massacre. The quartering of troops upon the people was no imaginary burden, but so real a wrong and grievance and outrage, that it later occupied a prominent place in the long list of wrongs and grievances recited in the Declaration of Independence. It touched most sharply sensibilities and personal rights. It invaded the home life, and its sanctity. It came as close as could be to all who suffered from it. It was a continual threat to those whose houses had not yet been invaded, that their turn might come next. It was a continual menace and was most heartily resented.

The Boston tea party of December, 1773, belongs to that period. In November, 1773, in the port of New York, another tea party was held and three tea ships were sent back to England, and of the cargo of tea in another, eighteen chests were found on board and were thrown into the bay. A merchant ship commanded by Captain Chambers arrived, and the Sons of Liberty, disguised as Indians, boarded her and the tea was thrown

overboard by them.<sup>1</sup> In November, 1773, New York merchants, even earlier than in Boston, refused to allow the landing of tea either with or without duty paid.<sup>2</sup>

Another Continental Congress, historically called the first but really the second Continental Congress, met September 5, 1774, in Philadelphia. Twelve of the thirteen colonies were represented. Not yet was independence even thought of. It adopted the celebrated "Articles of Association." It approved the resistance of the inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay to the enforcement of the obnoxious acts and counseled in cases of attempted enforcement that all America ought to support opposition thereto. It also summoned another Continental Congress to meet in Philadelphia, May 10th, 1775.

In the colony of New York especially, the Association pledge, a document for individual signatures pledging resistance to English oppression, was most widely circulated and signed.<sup>3</sup> Signature was pressed upon all. Every one must sign or decline to sign. The lines were drawn between those who sustained the crown and the patriots who maintained the rights of the colonies and resented and resisted their wrongs. It was not designed as an act of rebellion, but as a bond and pledge of union in opposition to oppression. It served to distinguish who was who; to call out the brave who were courageous enough to

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1. Lossing's *Field Book of the Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 586. The destruction of tea was by men disguised by Indians and called "Mohawks." There may have been an understanding at both Boston and New York, for in each tea party the actors were disguised as Indians.

2. Bancroft, *U. S.*, vol. 4, p. 172. Irving's *Washington*, Book I, p. 245.

3. Calendar of Revolutionary manuscripts on file in office of Secretary of State, Vol. IV., pp. 5 to 99. The form of the Association pledge was as follows; "Persuaded that the salvation of the rights and liberties of America depend under God, on the firm union of its inhabitants in a vigorous prosecution of the measures necessary for its safety; and convinced of the necessity of preventing anarchy and confusion which attend the dissolution of the powers of government, we, the freemen, freeholders and inhabitants of ———, being greatly alarmed at the avowed design of the Ministry to raise a revenue in America, and shocked by the bloody scene now acting in Massachusetts Bay, do, in the most solemn manner, resolve Never to Become Slaves; and do associate, under all the ties of religion, honor and love to our country, to adopt and endeavor to carry into execution whatever measures may be recommended by the Continental Congress or resolved upon by our Provincial Convention, for the purpose of preserving our Constitution, and opposing the execution of the several arbitrary acts of the British Parliament, until a reconciliation between Great Britain and America on Constitutional principles (which we most ardently desire) can be obtained; and that we will in all things follow the advice of the General Committee respecting the purposes aforesaid, the preservation of peace and good order, and the safety of individuals and property."

stand by the cause of the colonies; and to black list those who dared not, and place them with those who clung to the aristocratic relations with the rich and the official classes.

The names of James Clinton and George Clinton are found of course among those who signed the Association pledge.

Through all this period of ferment George Clinton had lived and grown as the people grew, strong and heroic, and loving the liberty which was sought more and more. He was forward in all that concerned those who resented the wrongs heaped upon the colonies. He emerged from his local sphere of Ulster County in 1768, when he was elected representative from his county to the Thirtieth General Assembly of the Colony of New York.<sup>1</sup> That Assembly was elected for five years, and commenced its session October 27, 1768, but by its action in December of that year, so offended the Governor of the Colony, that on the 2d day of January, 1769, it was dissolved by him.<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1769 the Thirty-first General Assembly of this Colony was elected under the cry of "No Lawyers and no Presbyterians." The lawyers were devoted to the vital principles of civil liberty and the Presbyterians were engaged in efforts to secure religious equality before the law, which was denied by the Government.<sup>3</sup>

The General Assembly met in April, 1769. George Clinton had been again chosen a representative of his county,<sup>4</sup> and took his seat in the body. It was a stormy body. It had a strong Tory party in it, which was all subservient to the prerogatives of the King, and to the influences of the aristocratic element in the colony. The patriots were divided into two factions, one for radical resistance, and the other for resistance, too, but for a more conservative and quiet treatment of the matter.<sup>5</sup>

It is not strange that such a man as George Clinton was, while a member of that General Assembly of the colony, a representative of the people, felt their grievances keenly, and his feeling was intensified by such an environment, the Tory element so strong, and the party of the people divided in counsel and in action. He threw himself with might and main in favor of the cause of the people against such rule as Great Britain gave them. While sitting in that Colonial Legislative Assembly, and not by

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1. N. Y. Civil List, Ed. of 1888, pp. 311, 312. 2. *Idem*, p. 109. 3. *Idem*, p. 109. 4. *Idem*, p. 312. 5. *Idem*, p. 109.

any means twenty-seven years of age, he became at once a prominent figure, and among all who surrounded him he became the leader of the party protesting and petitioning for redress, and resenting the grievances of the people and the encroachments on the liberties of the Colonists. The Assembly was attacked as having betrayed the cause of the people. Alexander McDougal, a patriot of the City of New York, afterward a Major-General in the Continental Army, issued a circular charging the Assembly with disloyalty to the people and with abandonment and betrayal of their cause.<sup>1</sup> He was arrested, and for months was imprisoned and then brought before the Assembly for trial, and it was George Clinton who, with ardor and zeal, defended McDougal before that body.<sup>2</sup>

It can well and most truly be said that George Clinton was no demagogue, and he was very near to the people.

The General Assembly refused to carry out the recommendation of the previous Continental Congress, and refused to use or circulate or enforce the Articles of Association.<sup>3</sup> The Continental Congress of 1774 had appointed another Continental Congress to sit in May, 1775, and the General Assembly of New York refused to appoint deputies to that Congress.<sup>4</sup>

A committee appointed by the Conservative Merchants of New York, and known as the Committee of Sixty, and also known as the Executive Committee, issued a call for a Provincial Convention to meet in New York City in March, 1775, to elect deputies to represent the Colony of New York in the Continental Congress.<sup>5</sup> George Clinton was elected a member of that Convention. It sat in New York April 20, 1775.

What a month was that month of April, 1775! The day before the Convention sat, April 19, 1775, was made eternally a part of the history of our country by the conflicts at Lexington and at Concord Bridge, where patriot blood flowed and baptized a patriot people, for a great struggle, and sealed the certainty of American independence. The General Assembly of the Colony of New York had held its last meeting April 3, adjourning to May 3, but it was never to meet again. The same Committee of Sixty, which called the Convention to elect deputies to

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1. McDougal's circular, signed "A Son of Liberty," in full in Clinton papers, Vol. I., p. 110. 2. N. Y. Civil List, Ed. of 1888, p. 110. 3. *Idem*, p. 119. 4. Calendar of Rev. MS., Vol. I., p. 3. 5. *Idem*, p. 3.

the Continental Congress, added to the events of that month of April by issuing a call inviting the counties to elect delegates to a Provincial Congress,<sup>1</sup> and George Clinton was chosen one of those delegates.<sup>2</sup> That body met May 22, and then became in fact the successor of the General Assembly of the Colony, for the powers of the Assembly were in fact superseded and assumed by that Provincial Congress in May, 1775, and that General Assembly never met again, although it had a life on paper, by reason only of being from time to time, nine times prorogued,<sup>3</sup> until May, 1776, after which no pretense even on paper recorded its continuing life, and it was never afterward heard of. The very name of Colony had become distasteful to the patriot people, and was dropped, and the Colony of New York disappeared from history, and from April, 1775, came to be known as the Province of New York.

What an atmosphere had been made by these events for the Second Continental Congress, and how events hurried on one after another.

The Convention met April 20, 1775, the next day after Lexington. Young man as he was, George Clinton's place as a patriot leader had already been fixed and made evident, and the Convention named him one of the representatives of the Province of New York to the Continental Congress.

The Continental Congress met May 10, 1775, in Philadelphia, and it was on that very day that Ticonderoga fell into the hands of the patriots, led by Ethan Allen. George Clinton took his seat May 15, 1775, having for associates as representatives from New York such men as John Jay, Philip Livingston, William Floyd, Francis Lewis and Lewis Morris.

Clinton having been also elected in May a member of the Provincial Congress, it is very difficult to see how he could discharge the duties of his position in the two bodies, the Provincial Congress and the Continental Congress meeting at the same time, at places then very distant from each other, but we cannot assume that he slighted either patriotic duty.

War was inevitable, though there was no formal declaration of war, and preparations for conflict went on. On June 15, 1775, George Washington, who was a member from Virginia of the Continental Congress, was appointed by that body General and

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1. N. Y. Civil List, Ed. of 1888, p. 113. 2. *Idem*. 3. *Idem*, p. 312.

Commander-in-Chief, and measures were taken to raise an army. On June 17, two days later, Bunker Hill had been fought, and Warren had given up his life for his country.

We can scarce understand the hour and the circumstances in which those men lived. As we read the story of those early conflicts, how long drawn upon was the patience of those patriotic men! Stung and rasped and goaded by the continued oppressive rule, and the accumulating oppressions suffered by the people, the repeated collisions with the King's army, and the blood of their fallen fellows that cried out from the ground for vindication, they yet sought to make terms with the King, and in proclaiming a general fast throughout the United Colonies, directed that the people should recognize the King as their lawful sovereign, and look to God for restoration of their rights and for reconciliation with the parent State.

Final action toward independence was not taken in any form until June 7, 1776, when Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, moved in Continental Congress a resolution that "these United Colonies are and of right should be free and independent States." This resolution was debated two days, and then further consideration postponed until July 2, in order that delegates might consult their constituents about it, and, meanwhile, it was referred to a committee of five, of which Jefferson was chairman. That resolution contained the germ of the immortal Declaration of Independence, and on the 2d day of July, 1776, the Congress adopted the resolution amplified in these words, "Resolved that these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States, and that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved." This, we see, was the real Declaration of Independence. Washington was already in the field. New York had been invaded, and at the summons of Washington Clinton at once hurriedly left Philadelphia and the deliberations of the Congress and went to the defense of his State, not, however, until he had voted, July 2, 1776, for the first resolution, the real Declaration of Independence, but before the document we know as the Declaration of Independence had been written out by Jefferson and reported ready for individual signature by the members of that

Congress. We cannot but regret that his name is not written at the foot of that document, amidst that galaxy of immortal names, and adding another to the four representatives of New York who signed the paper, few, indeed, for our great Empire State; but his obedience to the call of the great commander, and to arms and to a higher duty, will ever explain to those who read or hear the reason why, and will place his name in honor with them.

The actual separation of the several colonies, each from the other, becomes most apparent when we consider the fact, that although the Continental Congress raised its moneys for the war and had troops which were, in fact, raised by authority of the Continental Congress, and officers were appointed by it, yet in the several colonies the legislative bodies to a large extent directed military matters within their bounds, and there were troops called Regiments of the Line of each Colony, as the New York line, the Massachusetts line, etc., and there were Committees of Safety in the colonies which also exercised authority of a very actual nature. Still, with all this divided authority, the practical unity of the people in the cause is exemplified in the other fact that there was so little substantial division and dissension. There were remarkable personal enmities and jealousies. Place seekers abounded then as now, who would risk their country's cause for their own gain. There were many who coveted the places and command of others. There were those who aspired even to the place that Washington occupied, and bitter and libelous things were both written and said of him. But how supreme was Washington above them all. We stand in admiration of his colossal figure, and his incomparable character, despite of all libels and enmities and ambitions of others. Secure in his place of command, and in the confidence and affection of his countrymen, which he was never by any mistake or misfortune to lose. How truly after his death, more than twenty years later, was it said of him by the great John Marshall in the Halls of Congress, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Speech of John Marshall in the House of Representatives, and resolution moved by him adopted by the House December 19, 1799

"MR. SPEAKER

The melancholy event which was yesterday announced with doubt, has been rendered but too certain. Our Washington is no more! The hero, the patriot,

And how his death brought from the lips even of Jefferson, the words, "Washington's fame will go on increasing until the brightest constellation in yonder heavens shall be called by his

and the sage of America ; the man on whom in times of danger every eye was turned, and all hopes were placed, lives now only in his great actions, and in the hearts of an affectionate and afflicted people.

If, sir, it had not been usual openly to testify respect for the memory of those whom Heaven has selected as its instruments for dispensing good to man, yet such has been the uncommon worth, and such the extraordinary incidents, which have marked the life of him whose loss we all deplore, that the whole American nation, impelled by the same feelings, would call with one voice for a public manifestation of that sorrow, which is so deep and so universal.

More than any other individual, and as much to one individual as was possible, has he contributed to found this our wide-spreading empire, and to give to the western world independence and freedom.

Having effected the great object for which he was placed at the head of our armies, we have seen him convert the sword into the ploughshare, and sink the soldier in the citizen.

When the debility of our federal system had become manifest, and the bonds which connected this vast continent were dissolving, we have seen him the chief of those patriots who formed for us a constitution, which, by preserving the union, will, I trust, substantiate and perpetuate those blessings which our Revolution had promised to bestow.

In obedience to the general voice of his country, calling him to preside over a great people, we have seen him once more quit the retirement he loved, and, in a season more stormy and tempestuous than war itself, with calm and wise determination pursue the true interests of the nation, and contribute, more than any other could contribute, to the establishment of that system of policy, which will, I trust, yet preserve our peace, our honor, and our independence.

Having been twice unanimously chosen the chief magistrate of a free people, we have seen him at a time when his re-election with universal suffrage could not be doubted, afford to the world a rare instance of moderation, by withdrawing from his station to the peaceful walks of private life.

However the public confidence may change, and the public affections fluctuate with respect to others, with respect to him they have, in war and in peace, in public and in private life, been as steady as his own firm mind, and as constant as his exalted virtues.

Let us then, Mr. Speaker, pay the last tribute of respect and affection to our departed friend. Let the grand council of the nation display those sentiments which the nation feels. For this purpose I hold in my hand some resolutions, which I take the liberty of offering to the House.

*Resolved*, That the House will wait on the President, in condolence of this mournful event.

*Resolved*, That the speaker's chair be shrouded with black, and that the members and officers of the House wear black during the session.

*Resolved*, That a committee, in conjunction with one from the Senate, be appointed to consider on the most suitable manner of paying honor to the memory of the man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens."

Marshall stated afterward, in his Life of Washington, that these resolutions were drafted by Col. Henry Lee of Virginia, who could not be in his place to offer them. It is a remarkable fact that there are at least three different versions of the resolutions, one other of which is as follows: "Unanimously Resolved, 1. That this house will wait on the President of the United States, in condolence of this national calamity. 2. That the speaker's chair be shrouded in black, and that the members and officers of the house wear



name."<sup>1</sup> No more lofty words were ever written than compose the letter of the Senate of the United States to John Adams, then President of the United States, condoling with him upon the death of Washington.<sup>2</sup>

As we sail upon our Hudson River which flows always so peacefully, or hurry along its waters on our way to and from

mourning during the session. 3. That a joint committee of both houses be appointed to report measures suitable to the occasion and expressive of the profound sorrow with which Congress is penetrated on the loss of a citizen first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

1. Daneslie's Life of Jefferson, p. 358.

2. Letter to John Adams, President, adopted by the Senate of the United States, December 23, 1799:

"SIR :

The Senate of the United States respectfully take leave to express to you their deep regret for the loss their country sustains in the death of General George Washington.

This event, so distressing to all our fellow-citizens, must be peculiarly heavy to you, who have long been associated with him in deeds of patriotism. Permit us, sir, to mingle our tears with yours. On this occasion it is manly to weep. To lose such a man at such a crisis, is no common calamity to the world. Our country mourns a father. The Almighty Disposer of human events has taken from us our greatest benefactor and ornament. It becomes us to submit with reverence to him "who maketh darkness his pavilion."

With patriotic pride we review the life of our Washington, and compare him with those of other countries who have been pre-eminent in fame. Ancient and modern times are diminished before him. Greatness and guilt have too often been allied; but his fame is whiter than it is brilliant. The destroyers of nations stood abashed at the majesty of his virtues. It reproved the intemperance of their ambition, and darkened the splendor of victory. The scene is closed, and we are no longer anxious lest misfortune should sully his glory; he has traveled on to the end of his journey, and carried with him an increasing weight of honor; he has deposited it safely, where misfortune cannot tarnish it, where malice cannot blast it. Favored of Heaven, he departed without exhibiting the weakness of humanity. Magnanimous in death, the darkness of the grave could not obscure his brightness.

Such was the man whom we deplore. Thanks to God, his glory is consummated. Washington yet lives on earth in his spotless example; his spirit is in Heaven. Let his countrymen consecrate the memory of the heroic General, the patriotic statesman, and the virtuous sage. Let them teach their children never to forget that the fruits of his labors and his example are their inheritance."

NOTE.—In this connection, though not related to the death of Washington, but to the person and story of the man, it is interesting to note here two fairly authenticated facts, little known, that when Rochambeau came with the French troops to our assistance and D'Estaing came with a fleet of war vessels, in order that there should not be an element of dissension, the King of France sent to Washington a temporary commission as Marshal in the French army, that he might outrank Rochambeau in command of the French troops, and also a commission as Admiral in the French navy, that he might outrank D'Estaing and command him in the movements of the French war vessels.<sup>3</sup>

3. Our French Allies, 1778 to 1781, pages 373 to 378. Harper's Book of Facts, page 833, under date of May 11, 1780. Clinton papers, Vol. I., p. 100.

the marts of commerce and of trade and of a ceaseless industry, those beautiful waters, fringed with the most bounteous gifts of nature, its shores now abounding with all that wealth and art can add, we are altogether unconscious of the sounds and the paraphernalia of war, those scenes once heard and knew, and of the men who wrought for us there, and the intimate and important relation that this river had to that great birth struggle of our country. Yes, we seldom think of the men who, born on, or near its shores, had great place in those days, a hundred and more years ago.

The importance of the Hudson River as a means of access to New York City from the north and the danger involved in its possession by an enemy as cutting in two the colonies was well recognized before the war of the Revolution. The French had several times attempted this line of attack from her Canadian colony. Such an attack was planned by the French in 1689, and Frontenac in an attempt to accomplish it came down from the north, and penetrated as far as Schenectady which he burned, and scarce any parallel to that campaign for ferocity and blood and massacre is to be found in the stories of the most savage warfare. Later came Montcalm over the same ground and on the same errand. Clinton was not ignorant of what all that meant, for he too, as we have already seen, when only 19 years of age had fought on the northern borders of New York and had participated in successful resistance to the incursions of the French. And when the Revolutionary War broke out and resistance to the bitter end became the fixed purpose of the American people, the strategists of the English army did not originate, but adopted, the long well-known scheme, of expeditions north from New York City by the valley of the Hudson, and south from the Canadian border and by the Lake Champlain and the Hudson River to New York. The destruction of the vessels in Lake Champlain, the attack on Forts Clinton and Montgomery, the attack upon the army of Washington at and the battle of White Plains, the treachery of Arnold and his plan to deliver West Point to the enemy and the battle of Saratoga with the surrender of Burgoyne were all parts of the general plan and persistent attempt to carry out such a project.

No American officer of intelligence and of general informa-

tion as to the history of the past of the colonies, but knew of the importance of the Hudson River in the struggle for independence. Washington, of course, saw and appreciated all that the occupation of the valley of the Hudson would mean to the fate of the colonies. No one to-day, with that hindsight, so accurate to pick up the results of the might-have-been, fails to appreciate it at once. To separate New England from New York and the other colonies west and south, would mean to take our cause in detail and strike at will against our divided forces. Separated from each other and by so grand a waterway, which, once possessed, could be held securely by small armed craft, and with the port of New York at the south and Albany at the north garri-soned with troops, communication would be severed, supplies cut off and re-inforcements prevented.

Washington saw and took the situation in, and one of his letters on the subject is an example of terse and yet of all embracing statement.

At the instance of the Continental Congress, toward the end of May, 1775, action was taken in the Provincial Congress, toward the fortification of the Highlands, and a few days later George Clinton, then called Colonel Clinton, who probably was then attending its session, and Mr. Tappan, two of its members, were sent to the Highlands to inspect both banks of the Hudson River and to report the most proper place for erecting one or more fortifications. Only 14 days later, that committee having visited the Hudson River valley and inspected its possibilities of defense, reported recommending the building of Forts Constitution and Clinton and Montgomery, which forts the Provincial Congress then directed to be constructed. Dissensions and rivalries and other sores, so often the bane of almost every war, however, hindered the work almost a year.

We may rest assured that the time spent by Clinton in Philadelphia during sessions of the Continental Congress was not occupied only with the legislative and deliberative duties of that body. Washington needed to know of the matters concerning New York, and to be accurately informed of the military situation there, and its military resources and of the possibilities of the Hudson River. Many and long were the conferences be-

tween Washington and Clinton concerning these things, and the Highlands, and their defense, during the waiting days and days of preparation, and while they were fellow-members of the Continental Congress.<sup>1</sup> No one was better qualified than Clinton to tell to Washington just what he wanted to know and to supply to the great commander the information so necessary to possess and there was no one better qualified with whom to advise in order to measure and to plan the necessary defenses for the whole line in the impending struggle. These conferences also enabled Washington to measure up the capacity of the young patriot for other responsibilities, for it seems beyond doubt that it was at that time that he acquired such confidence in the powers and capacities and character of Clinton, such a sense of the sincerity of his patriotism, such an admiration for his personality, that he was enabled later, as he did, to write so warmly and positively of him to others, and to commend him to others as one who could be relied upon and trusted for most responsible places; and to commend his zeal and his work, and to entrust him with such important military command. The friendship between the two, commenced at that time, afterwards continued to grow and develop. Washington became the close friend of Clinton, and during the years that followed the friendship never cooled, but became more and more close and intimate; and that friendship, despite all differences of opinion survived the war and continued through the life of Washington.<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to trace fully all the steps of Clinton in all his work in those eventful days. No doubt so young and so active a man as he was, he strove to perform conscientiously his full duty to New York as a member of its Provincial Congress and also to discharge his other duties as a member of the Continental Congress so long as he remained a member of that body, until active duties as a soldier called him away, and perhaps also to keep hold on a private business at home. It must have been a most difficult task in those times, before the era of railroads and the telegraph. No one could ever guess the events of a day to come, much less of a longer future. With a people divided in

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1. Irving Washington. Book 2, p. 70.

2. In the last will and testament of Washington, Clinton is mentioned in language which indicates, that they were so close, that they made joint investments, long after the termination of the war.

sentiment, between, on one side, those of the aristocratic Tory party not to be trusted with any measure of confidence or good faith or even simple-hearted friendship; and on the other side, self-sacrificing, patriots, devotedly determined on the acquisition of liberty in some form. Those who had little doubt of the ultimate end, must have been most anxious all the time.

We cannot here recall all that was done by that Continental Congress nor all the events in which Clinton figured during its first year. He faithfully attended its earlier sessions. In December, 1775, he had been appointed by the Provincial Congress of New York a Brigadier-General of the Militia of the Province. From his oft-expressed sense of his unfitness to command large bodies of soldiers, it will not be possible to assume that he sought the place. It was the general sense of the people of New York, that he was a man of patriotism, of ability, of honesty, and faithful in all things entrusted to him. Perhaps a recollection of his prowess as a young soldier in the French and Indian wars, suggested and secured his appointment to military command, unsought by him and perhaps without his knowledge. How much it took him from his duties in the Continental Congress, we do not know. But we do know that apparently he was attentive and faithful in those duties until July, 1776, when he was called away to the defense of New York.

The militia of those days were not as the militia of these days. The City of New York was a hot-bed of Tory sentiment and the local militia were not to be trusted. The country districts were true. From the agricultural country the ranks of the militia regiments were filled, with the toilers in the fields. But the harvests, too, must be cared for to feed the people, and the alternation of service in the two fields, must have rendered duty most difficult, and the hold upon the service of the patriot and his response to the call to arms, a difficult one. Yet we believe that the ear of the patriot farmer soldier was sharp to hear the call, when it came, whenever and wherever it should find him.

When in December, 1775, George Clinton was appointed by the Provincial Congress a Brigadier-General of the Militia of the Province of New York, he was assigned to a district in which was the county of Orange and his own county of Ulster. It

was therefore to him that fell with his other duties a most perplexing and difficult task. When we keep in mind that he was to keep in touch with the militia of his command, to be ready for any emergency, to regard and obey various calls to duty and the distance from each other of the places in which he was to discharge those duties, then his difficulties become apparent.

In the midst of those duties in the Continental Congress, and as we have shown, after he had voted July 2, 1776, for the resolution declaring the Independence, he with Washington forsook the place for the camp and field. If they had not so promptly gone to the soldier's post of duty, they might also a few days later have affixed their names to the immortal paper we call the Declaration of Independence. Washington commanded and Clinton obeyed, and the camp and field took the place of deliberative legislative work, and the eloquence of arms took the place of eloquence of words.

From the moment of the appointment of George Clinton in December, 1775, as Brigadier General in the Militia of the Province, he justly conceived the conviction that his place was with the troops, and his place of service the camp and the field, rather than in the conferences of the Provincial or the Continental Congress, and yet he lingered and discharged his duties in those conferences until his State was invaded and the command of Washington came to him to leave for active service.

George Clinton was not filled with any foolish vanity about his own ability as a soldier. After the battle of White Plains, and in November, 1776, he wrote to the Committee of Safety that he was told that war consisted of strategem and deceptions, but he did not understand much of the refined art of war.<sup>1</sup> Later, possessed with a sense of his own unfitness for so high a command of men, he desired to resign his command, but was met by the assurance of the Committee of Safety that his country could not afford to dispense with his services in the field.<sup>2</sup> In March, 1777, he again proposed to resign his command, and wrote that his intention was not from any disgust of the service, but that from fatal experience he found that he was not able to render to his country the service which they had reason to expect of him, considering the command he had been entrusted with.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Clinton Papers, vol 1, p. 400. 2. Idem, p. 409. 3. Idem, p. 642

Elsewhere he writes, that he would gladly command a regiment or a company for the privilege of serving his country.<sup>1</sup> And again, that he would as lief command a company as a brigade, and asked leave to resign his high commission.<sup>2</sup> Writing to the convention he says : "I will most cheerfully turn into the ranks "and do the duty of a private, and from the knowledge I have "as an officer of the necessity of discipline and subordination, I "trust at least I shall be an obedient soldier."<sup>3</sup>

His faithfulness to this notion could not obscure his own sense of his lack of military knowledge and experience, or his own modest measure of his military ability.

It is refreshing to find such sentiments somewhere, when we read of so much ambition, and jealousy, and envy of officers not content to serve except in high places.

In March, 1777, he was appointed by the Continental Congress a Brigadier-General in the Continental Army. This appointment, it is said, was made at the earnest recommendation of Washington. He then wrote to Washington, "My "precarious state of health and want of military knowledge "would have rather induced me to have led a more retired life "than that of the army, had I been consulted on the occasion, but "as early in the present contest I laid it down as a maxim not to "refuse my best, though poor services, to my country in any "way they should think proper to employ me, I cannot refuse "the honor done me in the present appointment." His reference to his state of health reminds us that he was in that eventful year, 1775, thrown upon a bed of serious sickness and for months lay seriously ill, and his friends feared the worst and were most profuse in their expressions of gladness at his recovery.<sup>4</sup>

None questioned Clinton's sincerity in what he said and wrote. He was one of the soldiers of the Revolutionary war who served from a sense of duty and not from military pride or love of personal glory. His whole service, civil and military, show modest worth and devoted patriotism.

Almost at once upon his appointment as Brigadier-General in the Continental Army, Clinton was assigned to the command of the defenses of the Highlands and the Hudson River, and

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1. Clinton papers, Vol. I., p. ——. 2. *Idem*, p. ——. 3. *Idem*, Letter of Clinton, p. 654. 4. *Idem*, p. 214.

thereafter it was most difficult even when called to serve in the highest civil office, to draw him from his post, to take upon himself any other duty, no matter how exalted.

Having on previous occasions sought to lay down his command of the militia, in May, 1777, he wrote to the President of the Provincial Convention, "For many reasons, as well as that arising from my appointment in the Continental Army, lead me to wish to have no further command of the militia. I therefore beg leave to resign my commission as Brigadier-General of the Counties of Ulster and Orange, and that you will be pleased to accept this as my resignation of the command to me thereby given."<sup>1</sup> This resignation, it seems, was treated as those of previous occasions, and the convention of representatives refused to relieve him,<sup>2</sup> and later we find him exercising powers as Brigadier-General of Militia and calling them out for service.

This paper cannot be more than a comparatively short sketch of so active and eventful a life as that of George Clinton, and we cannot follow in detail all that he did as a soldier. His service in the Highlands, at Forts Clinton and Montgomery, have been much written of, and so much written of, that we are glad to know that there were other places where he served. But his conspicuous personal bravery displayed in the defense of these forts no doubt has singled them out for the pen of the writer. They belong to the series which ended eleven days later in the surrender of Burgoyne. Surely those were glorious fights. Overwhelmed with the hordes of the enemy, and vastly outnumbered, the defense was desperate and brave. His escape from death, and the escape of his brother James, seem like miracles. It was to be beaten at one point to fly to and fight at another, and though the forts were lost, like many other fights in the Revolutionary war, they were parts of a great and glorious campaign which closed with a triumph, and as defeats, developed a sense of ability to fight, which opened the eyes of the enemy, and taught those who lost to-day that other fields were before them to win and gave a consciousness of resource. The river counties of the Hudson, from Kingsbridge to Poughkeepsie, became most familiar ground to Clinton and his command. Fort Washington and Kingsbridge, Yonkers and Eastchester, White Plains,

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1. Clinton Papers, Clinton letter, Vol. I., p. 808. 2. Idem, p. 836.



North Castle, along the Croton River and at Peekskill, at Ramapo and Haverstraw, at the order of the Committee of Safety into New Jersey with his brigade, and at Hackensack ; on secret expeditions through Westchester County hunting the cowboys ; all these places witnessed his services as a soldier. On October 28, 1776, he with his brigade was at the battle of White Plains. On the night before that battle he wrote to McKesson, the Chairman of the Committee of Safety, giving some of the events of the day, and at the end of the letter threw in a message to his wife, showing that amidst the excitement of camp and battle he knew he had a wife and a home. He also wrote, "Pray let "Mrs. Clinton know that I am well and that she need not be "uneasy about me. It would be too much honor to die in so good "a cause."

He was not over-content with idle watching in the Highlands, and in August, 1777, wrote to Washington that it would have been equally agreeable to have headed the militia and marched to the re-enforcement of the northern army as to have commanded where he was, at Fort Montgomery. Had he marched to reinforce that army he would have been in the surrender of Burgoyne.

Clinton had become so important a factor and his work so wide known to the enemy that a price was put upon his head, and the British authorities in New York regarded him of importance enough to offer a reward of £500 for his capture and delivery to the authorities in New York.

In these recent days we have been celebrating the centennial of West Point, but we have not heard nor read of the mention of George Clinton's name in all that has been said or written. It should be added to the story that on the 20th day of December, 1777, Clinton wrote to Washington suggesting the fitness of West Point as a stronghold and a defense of the Hudson River. This suggestion no doubt occasioned the first occupation of the place for public purposes.

When the time came for the acknowledgment by Great Britain of the independence of the colonies, it fell to the lot of George Clinton to occupy a most prominent place. He was Governor of the State of New York, and he was also a General officer of the Continental army. The evacuation by the British troops of

the City of New York was to take place. The negotiations were conducted personally between Washington and Sir Guy Carleton. Clinton was in command of the troops along the Hudson, and as to its terms and all of the details of that evacuation, Washington consulted with Clinton. It is said that Clinton requested of Washington the command of the troops that should take possession of the city and that Washington accorded to him that honor. Gen. Knox, however, seems to have had command of the troops that took possession of Fort George. The day came and the British marched out and took boats to the transports in the harbor and our own service-weathered veterans marched in. The mounted men were in advance, first the dragoons, followed by the light infantry, the artillery, more light infantry, the Massachusetts troops, Washington and Clinton following on horseback and riding together, escorted by a squadron of Westchester Light Horse, commanded by Capt. Delevan. Then came the Lieut. Governor of New York and the Council. Then followed Gen. Knox and a body composed of war-worn officers of the army, then a body of citizens on horseback and last a long line of citizens on foot. What a scene that must have been and how it must have affected the patriot hearts of those who were true through all the years of British possession. The feelings of such can best be expressed by the words of a young woman who was then present and who wrote of what she saw in these words : " We have been accustomed to military display in " all the finery of garrison life. The troops that marched out " were equipped as for show, and with their scarlet uniforms " and burnished arms made a brilliant display. The troops " that marched in were ill-clad and weather beaten, and made a " forlorn appearance ; but they were our troops. As I looked " on them and thought of all they had done, and suffered for us, " my heart and my eyes were full and I admired and gloried in " them the more, because they were weather-beaten and for- " lorn."<sup>1</sup>

That was a great day for the patriot army. That evening George Clinton, who was then as has just been said, Governor as well as General, acted as host and entertained Washington and the officers of the army at Fraunces' Tavern in Broad street

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1. Irving's Washington, Book 4, p. 69.

at a great dinner. Imagination alone must supply the story of what then took place, the loud rejoicing which must generally have prevailed, the solemn sense of what it all meant, to the people, to the country and to the future, which no doubt filled the thoughts of some at least of those who composed what could not be other than a hilarious company.

The following Monday, Clinton gave another dinner in New York to Luzerne, the French Ambassador, and to Washington and his generals, and to 1,000 other gentlemen. It was royal in its conception and compass and befitting to the hour. On the following Thursday, Washington took leave of his staff and the officers of his army and of Clinton, his trusted friend, and took his way to Annapolis to surrender to the Continental Congress the powers he had exercised for seven years. The peaceful work of sending forward a new nation on its mission, of peace, of freedom, and progress, and leadership, had commenced, and those who were great in war were to turn their attention to the pursuits of peace. Surely they had a noble example in that of Washington.

We have done with the Revolutionary War as related to Clinton. But meanwhile other events of a civil nature had taken place to which he was most intimately related.

The Declaration of Independance having been adopted, the Continental Congress advised the States, each for itself, to adopt some form of government. A long period elapsed before many changes were made in the form of government into which the States had drifted, and the history of the government under written constitutions is most interesting. Strange that Rhode Island retained her old colonial charter until the year 1843. New Jersey was the first State to accomplish the task of framing a constitution. New York was next in order. The same convention of the representatives of the State of New York, which meeting at White Plains, received by post-rider the news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on the 10th day of July, 1776, and adopted or ratified it, undertook to comply with the recommendations of the Continental Congress and to form a system of government for the State and assumed the task of framing a written constitution. The work of evolving that document fell to the hands and lot of John Jay, and what a task

it was. That convention migrated to many places during the events of the war. It was to meet in New York City, July 8, 1776, and proceed with the work of framing a form of government. The fleet of Lord Howe had appeared near Sandy Hook and the meeting was held at White Plains. It also met at Harlem, at Fishkill and finally at Kingston. What was the form of government to be? The great idea of a government of the people, by the people, for the people, that we talk of to-day, was most certainly the goal of these men. There was no precedent to follow. No republic had existed for hundreds of years. There was no pattern of a written constitution to help those men in framing one for New York. The document prepared was reported March 12, 1777, and was considered for a whole month by the Convention, and was adopted April 20, 1777. The instrument took up in detail the wrongs suffered, and reciting them one after another used them as reasons for a new order of things, and enacted the provisions for government which insured against any more of it. The paper was nearer to the people than any of the revised constitutions of these days. The experience with a king seemed to dictate that even the chief Executive should not exercise many of the powers we are now without question or hesitation accustomed to grant to him. The convention sat until May 13, 1777, but did not adjourn without adopting resolutions recording the thanks of the people to George Clinton for his faithful services as delegate to the Continental Congress and to the colony of New York and to the State.

The Constitution, among other things, provided for a Governor as the Chief Executive of the State and for a Lieutenant Governor, who should discharge the duties of Governor in his absence. Among all the competent patriots of those days, and there were many, the choice of the people, it seems, was not difficult, nor was the affection and the confidence of the people uncertain, for from among them all, and without the nomination of any political convention, George Clinton was chosen both, first Governor, and first Lieutenant Governor, as though they wanted him and him only. Clinton had again and again before this been made to know the esteem of the people. As we have said, he was elected to the Thirtieth and Thirty-first General

Assemblies of the colony ; to the convention that appointed delegates to the Continental Congress, and he was elected a delegate to that Continental Congress. and voted for the Declaration of Independence. He was elected a member of that Provincial Congress of New York which met at White Plains in July, 1776, received news of the Declaration of Independence, and which caused it to be read and ratified it, and then changed its own name from the Provincial Congress of New York to " the Convention of Representatives of the State of New York." That was the same convention that was called upon to frame the first Constitution of the State of New York, and now, under that Constitution, Clinton had been elected Chief Magistrate of the new State. It is interesting in these times to read what was said and written in those times by some, concerning this man, who occupied so large a place in the hearts of the people. Judge Jones, the Tory historian, already mentioned in this paper, wrote of him : " He lived at Kingston, paid his address to and married a pretty Dutch girl, Miss Tappan, daughter of an eminent, substantial burgher of that Corporation. This match was the foundation to all his after-greatness. His wife had a brother, a Christopher Tappan, one of the Trustees of and Clerk to that corporation, a young fellow of influence and of fortune, and well respected at Kingston. In the Dutch towns of the Province of New York (Kingston is entirely so) the inhabitants are all related. Cousins in the fifteenth degree are looked upon as nearly related as cousins germain are in an English town. The Tappan family, in consequence of this kind of consanguinity, was related to almost the whole town. Clinton, in right of his marriage, of course became also related. Clinton had art, cunning, and a good share of understanding. He was a rigid, true Presbyterian, and had a good deal of hypocrisy. He made the most of his connection. The Congress of 1774 ordered committees appointed in every city, county, town and district to see that their resolutions were carried into execution, with full power and authority to punish any person who should disobey them. Clinton was elected Chairman of the Ulster County Committee, and of that of the corporation of Kingston. Clinton was now in full power, and despotic as the King in France and as cruel and arbitrary as the Grand Turk.

"He now condemned, imprisoned, and punished loyalists most "unmercifully. They were by his orders tarred and feathered, "carted, fined, whipped and banished, and in short every kind "of cruelty, death not excepted, was practiced by this emissary "of rebellion."<sup>1</sup> This was the verdict of a Tory against a patriot, honored in war, honored in peace, and honored in history. Its statements do not pass even with much salt. At most it amuses us.

But some things were said, even by those on his own side against Clinton. General Schuyler, whom Bancroft says owed his place to his social position and not to any military talent, owned that Clinton was virtuous and loved his country, yet when he was elected Governor, foolishly, for an American, wrote of him, "His family and connections do not entitle him to so distinguished a pre-eminence."<sup>2</sup> How foolish a man this Schuyler was! The aid of Vermont was needed and the co-operation of all New England was necessary; yet Schuyler gave leave for half the New England militia to go home at once and the rest to follow in three weeks, and then called upon Washington to supply their places by troops from south of the Hudson River, saying that one southern soldier was worth two from New England.<sup>3</sup> We may well wonder if some of the same mistaken measures of the value of a New England or a Yankee soldier was not possessed by others of several generations nearer to us.

But when Washington heard that Clinton had been elected Governor of the State of New York, he wrote to the Committee of Safety, "His character will make him peculiarly useful at "the head of your State."

Clinton elected Governor, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced personally to leave the field and camp and his military command in the Highlands and proceed for a few days to Kingston and take the oath of office. Message after message was sent to him, and messenger after messenger went for him before he responded. Pierre Van Cortlandt for the Council wrote him of his election as Governor and also as Lieutenant-Governor, and asked him to come with all convenient speed and take the oath of office. Clinton replied, writing from

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1. Jones' History of N. Y., Vol. 2, p. 326. 2. Bancroft's History of U. S., Vol. 5, p. 580. 3. Idem, p. 381.

Fort Montgomery, that if he was left to his own inclinations he would decline both offices, but conceiving himself not at liberty to refuse his services to whatever office called by the suffrages of the public, he would repair to Kingston to take the oath as soon as the safety of the post would permit ; that he thought his election as Governor left the office of Lieutenant-Governor vacant and a resignation unnecessary ; but lest there might be a difference of opinion he resigned that office ; that he expected an attack by the enemy on his post, which required his steady attention there until their intentions were certainly known.

To General Putnam he also wrote that he had been summoned by the Committee of Safety to give attendance on the making of the Government, but till the designs of the enemy were more certainly known, and he had Washington's leave, he could not think of leaving his post.

He wrote to Washington that he had received a second summons to take the oath of office.

Clinton did not take the oath of office until July 30, 1777. He was congratulated by many upon his assuming office. The Church at Kingston congratulated the State that they "had a Governor who understands and therefore lives the Christian religion," which brought from Clinton the words, that he "relied upon Divine Providence and the prayers of fellow citizens put up in his behalf to render his service effectual, in promoting the happiness of the people, and for himself besought that it might please the Supreme Ruler of all events to crown them with great glory and success."<sup>1</sup>

As Governor he did not regard himself as relieved from his duty to obey military orders, for the next day after taking the oath of office as Governor, Washington wrote desiring him to repair to Fort Montgomery immediately if he possibly could consistent with his duties as Governor. This request he regarded as a command, and obeyed and prorogued the Legislature to a more convenient season when he could meet them.

Although he had accepted the office and assumed the duties of Governor, Clinton gave more of his time and energy to his military command in the field and did not relieve himself, by assuming civil duties, from his duties in camp and field. Washington counted on him as a soldier. Putnam kept up communi-

tion with him whenever he was away from camp discharging his duties as Governor, keeping himself informed of where he could be reached, in emergencies, when conflict and battle was threatening and was expected, and wrote to and sent for Clinton, securing his return to the command, as though no battle on the Hudson could be risked without Clinton and his influence on the militia of New York and New England.

We have been accustomed to hear of the war governors, those who were Governors of the State during the period of the Civil War, who however never saw the enemy and never were in a skirmish, much less a battle. But George Clinton was a veritable War Governor, a War Governor in every sense, for while he was Chief Magistrate of his State he actually commanded and led the troops both in and out of his State and with them personally fought the enemies of his country on the field of battle.

What a galaxy of men were among the first Governors of those new States; each State a new and independent nation. What a roll it was! These were some of them: George Clinton was Governor of New York; John Hancock was Governor of Massachusetts; Thomas Chittenden of Vermont; Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut; William Livingston of New Jersey; Patrick Henry of Virginia; John Rutledge of South Carolina.

The first Legislature of the State of New York under that constitution of 1777, was to have met in July, but Governor Clinton was too busy in the field to meet them and he prorogued it until Sept. 9, 1777 on which day they assembled at Kingston, and the next day they met the Governor for the first time in the Court Room and he delivered to them his first message, orally, and it was almost wholly devoted to measures for prosecution of the war. He must have remained a few days only, attending to the demands of his office as Chief Magistrate, for we find him on October 4th at New Windsor, his military headquarters, in short communication with the front, the forts in the Highlands, and on the 6th of October was at the head of his command in Forts Clinton and Montgomery and in the very front of the fight defending these posts.

Each of the States was in fact at this period a new and independent nation. We do not seem to realize in these days that fact. As colonies of Great Britain they were separate



colonies, and often were at odds as to their boundaries, and this was especially so as between New York and Connecticut and between New York and New Jersey. The sea coast front was a great matter to each of them and to New York, hemmed in as she was, it was most important and she held her own until she got a lion's share. All the Continental conferences and congresses that preceded the war were wholly voluntary conferences without other than moral power. When the independence was declared their power was realized only because it was accepted by the people. The Legislative bodies in the different colonies or Provinces claimed and asserted and had established each for itself, such power and such independent control, that each sent and recalled and substituted, their representatives in the Continental Congress just as they pleased, and that body had become a mere creature of the Colonial or Provincial or State Legislatures. It was not until after many of the States, New York among the number, had fully organized a separate and independent State government, that any sort of a bond uniting the colonies in war or in government was devised. In November, 1777, the Articles of Confederation were adopted by the Continental Congress and were recommended to the States, which were asked to ratify and adopt the bond. New York and several other States adopted at once the Articles of Confederation, but New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland held off and did not come in for from two to four years, so that until 1781 it was not an accepted bond for all.

In the midst of the throes of a war on which their liberties depended, and to which war, union was as necessary as guns and men, it was that spirit of independence which could not be downed and was uppermost in the minds and hearts of the patriots in the separate States, that led the Legislatures to keep a strong hand on the Continental Congress.

And the Articles of Confederation after the war had ended did not prevent the assertion of the sovereign rights of the free and independent States. Year after year it became more and more apparent that it was a mere rope of sand, and scarce more than a treaty to prevent conflicts between the States, and for mutual defence against outside foes. In fact its second section expressly declares, "each State retains its sovereignty, freedom

and independence and every power, jurisdiction and right which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled," and the third section in the plainest of language declares the paper to be a mere "firm league of friendship."

A common enemy in time of war was itself a mutual bond of union, but the war was at last over, and the relation of the States to each other was such as to cause ceaseless friction, which the Articles of Confederation did not reach. There was no real union between the States. There was no executive ; no central government. Each State was in law and in fact just what the Articles recognized, a separate nation. We need not here recall the irritating causes of trouble which grew out of the existing conditions.

A remedy was demanded and a convention was called of delegates representing all the States, but it was expressly stated that the only object and their only authority was to frame and propose amendments to the Articles of Confederation.<sup>1</sup> George Clinton was then Governor of the State of New York. We do not doubt, but if he had not been Governor, he would have been called to that public service as a delegate to that convention. The fact that he was Governor imposed upon him duties that forbade his absence from the State on such a service. The convention met in Philadelphia, May 14, 1787, and set about its work. It became apparent that no amendment of the Articles of Confederation would furnish the remedy desired, and although not delegated or called or authorized to any such purpose, they abandoned the purpose and authority of the convention, and assumed without any authority whatever to frame the document we call the Constitution of the United States, an instrument concerning which it has been said our fathers wrote better than they knew. Yet even that document at first had faults and required radical amendments, to secure its acceptance by the States. It contained no bill of rights. It wholly omitted those words contained in the Articles of Confed-

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1. In his speech in the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, Mr. Lansing, a delegate from New York, so declared and instanced the credentials of the delegates as testimony of the fact, and that New York would never have concurred in sending delegates if she had supposed otherwise. Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States, vol. 3, p. 129.

eration limiting the powers of Congress and reserving to the States the powers not granted to Congress. It contained no reservations of any rights whatever to the States.

When the Constitution came down to the Legislature of New York for adoption or ratification, George Clinton opposed it and sought to make the act of New York a conditional acceptance. His opposition has been often criticised and condemned, and unjustly.

It is always difficult to get a complete view of all the surroundings that influence action, and it is entirely unfair to judge of the men of those days, unless we get a comprehensive view of the environment that existed, and the schooling in which they had been trained. Many of our fellow-citizens have been taught to look upon any statement of what is called the doctrine of States rights even as of those days, as only another sort of copperheadism, as a form of treason and a most horrible and detestable and dangerous manifestation of a terrible political heresy. A study of the history of our country easily serves to show that such an opinion comes of a most lamentable lack of knowledge and want of acquaintance with our history, and ignorance concerning the underlying principles of our government.

Recall, if you will, the story of our forefathers, and the school in which they were educated, and the experiences which wrought in them the iron characters from which we have profited. They came across the seas bringing with them a purpose of local self-government, and left behind them, and hated by them too, the strong central government which had restrained the swelling in the heart for, and any active manifestations of any form of, what we now call, Anglo-Saxon Liberty. Was it strange that the other extreme at once developed in this new country, separated so far, by the almost trackless seas from the land, then almost an absolutism, which they had left behind. The towns in Connecticut and almost generally, in New England, erected each its independency. They clung with the severest tenacity to the charters they had obtained. The distances of those days were almost insuperable obstacles to the withdrawal of those chartered privileges. The attempts that were made to withdraw them, only induced the Colonies to cling to them with the greater tenacity and determination not to lose them. Popular

sovereignty grew strong in such a soil and environment. When larger colonies were chartered, and it was sought to withdraw the earlier charters, and to aggregate into larger communities the territory and the smaller colonial governments, they refused to give up their charters and resisted the new order of things. We recall the Gov. Andros war, and the story of the Charter Oak, as two only of the many instances of resistance to that early form of centralization. The influence of New England spread to the other colonies and the principle which manifested itself in the opposition, or hesitancy, not to use stronger terms, of the patriots who did not fall over each other in a race to be foremost in the cheerful acceptance of the proposed Constitution of the United States, is to be laid to account, not of any lack of enthusiastic and patriotic devotion to country, but to education in adversity and in trial in the founder period, which came to our forefathers in resisting centralization, so often attempted to be forced upon them by the powers from which they had fled across the seas.

A convention was elected in New York to consider and act upon the proposed Constitution of the United States, and to this convention George Clinton was elected and became its President. He and his fellows had a right as they did, to look at the Constitution on its merits, as having what were in reality serious, but remediable, defects, and had a right also to look at and criticize it, as the volunteered work of a convention chosen to do an entirely different thing, and not at all to frame that Constitution. He did not, however, counsel the rejection of the work as that which the convention was neither authorized nor invited to do, but he did propose that it should be accepted conditionally, the condition being its amendment in certain particulars, among others, the insertion of the bill of rights, and the restoration of the limitation on the powers of Congress and of the reservation to the States of all the powers not granted in the instrument. These were in the Articles of Confederation and they were not rightly omitted from the Constitution, and they were not light conditions nor were they immaterial. To give unlimited powers to Congress was to take from the States all sovereignty whatever. To reserve to the States all powers not granted to Congress was to continue to the people of the States

full and unlimited sovereignty, as to all powers not enumerated, and further it was only to continue the same reservation patriotic men had inserted in the Articles of Confederation ; and the catalogue of those surrendered for the general good, being specified, and being few, were easy to be read, though their comprehensiveness, as we have since learned, was marvelous.

It will be wholly aside from truth to claim that George Clinton was beaten in this fight and it would be most ungenerous to claim that he compromised. The result in the end was so near that for which he strove that when he and those he led agreed to a ratification of the Constitution, not on a condition that it should be amended, but a ratification with a statement of how it was to be understood and interpreted, and with a recommendation that it should be so amended, and which amendments with others soon followed, we may well put aside all criticism of Clinton for any so-called opposition or hesitancy in the matter. Let it be remembered that the only test vote in that convention, before the final vote, showed the party of Clinton to be largely in the majority, and without a considerable number of that party the small majority necessary could not have been obtained in favor of ratification. George Clinton, let it be remembered, was the President of the Convention. On the final vote all the delegates from Ulster County, save Clinton alone, voted solid against the ratification of the Constitution. He is not recorded as voting on the question. It is not possible at this time to say, whether in those times it was the custom for the presiding officer to vote at all, save when the convention was evenly divided. It certainly can never be laid to the charge of Clinton that he was lacking in moral courage. He would have dared to vote. He did not shirk any official duty. He most certainly would have voted with his colleagues from Ulster if he was of the same opinion with them, and felt at liberty as presiding officer to vote at all, except by a casting vote. How he actually felt can be best evidenced by his own words. In his address or message to the legislature the following December, he said of the proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States already ratified : " A declaration of rights, with certain explanations, are inserted in order to remove doubtful constructions, and to guard against undue and improper administration, and that it was assented to in the express confidence that

“ the exercise of different powers would be suspended until it  
 “ (the constitution) should undergo a revision by a general con-  
 “ vention of the States, \* \* \* \* nothing short  
 “ of the fullest confidence of obtaining such revision could  
 “ have prevailed upon a sufficient number to have ratified it  
 “ without stipulating for previous amendments.”

In the haste of some, the more to glorify illustrious and great men, already become human idols, it has often been said that we owe to the eloquence of Alexander Hamilton the ratification by New York of the Constitution of the United States. I am disposed to believe that it was rather to the eloquence of events, than to the eloquence of words, that we are indebted for that result. We all know that the constitution was to be of force when nine of the States had ratified it. New York and Virginia had long discussions in their conventions and meanwhile the action was being taken in other States. The fight waxed warm in New York about the provisions which were in the Articles of Confederation and were not in the Constitution. News came suddenly and unexpectedly to the convention that New Hampshire had acted and had, June 21, 1788, ratified the Constitution.<sup>1</sup> Virginia ratified it on the 25th of June, but that fact was not known in New York until long after the action of New Hampshire had had its effect. It was on the 25th of June and long before the action of Virginia was known in New York that Chancellor Livingston rose in his place, and with the dignity that became the great lawyer and jurist, the highest judicial officer of the State, called attention of the convention to the fact that New Hampshire was the ninth State that had thus acted; that the constitution was no longer a question, but was a fact; that the confederation of the States was hence dissolved, and that a nation had been born, and that New York, the Empire State, with all its possibilities, was no part of that nation; that New York now stood practically outside the league of States, with that league arrayed against it; to the danger to the future of the State and its people impending from such a position.<sup>2</sup> It needed not any oratory of words to face the consideration of the new momentous dilemma which Livingston stated in a question, whether New York should place itself out of the Union?

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1. Curtis Constitutional History of the U. S., Vol. 1, p. 677. 2. Idem, p. 677.

The convention, July 26, 1788, by a slender majority, instead of ratifying the Constitution on condition of amendment, was thus forced to ratify it with a recommendation of amendments, which were proposed, and in which recommendation five others—Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina—joined. The patriotism of those men, and of George Clinton with them, was fully justified, as will be at once seen. In the first Congress eleven amendments of the Constitution were proposed to the States. Of these amendments ten were ratified by the requisite number of States and became a part of the Constitution, and this was so soon done that an eminent historian has written that they “were “so soon added after its adoption that they may fairly be considered part of the original instrument.”<sup>1</sup> These amendments embraced, practically, the bill of rights, the limitation of the powers of Congress and the reservation to the States of all the powers not delegated to Congress. They were the principles for which George Clinton had fought. The adoption of them so quickly and in the short way provided for in the Constitution itself, made unnecessary a convention of the States for a general revision, and satisfied the utmost demand of the most bitter opposition.

Think for a moment how those very amendments secure our liberties! What were they, and what did they secure? Religious liberty, freedom of speech and of the press, the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition for redress of grievances, the right of the people to bear arms, and the States each to have its own militia, no quartering in times of peace of soldiers on the people, security of the people, their persons, houses and effects from unreasonable search, no warrant to arrest the citizen without probable cause, and then only supported by oath or affirmation, the accusation of capital and infamous crime only by a Grand Jury, no one to be put in jeopardy twice for same crime, no one to be compelled to be a witness against himself or to be deprived of life, liberty or property save by due process of law, private property to be taken only for the public and only in compensation, public trials and by impartial juries and in the district where the crime was committed, the accused to be in-

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1. Johnson's *American Politics*, p. 16.

formed of the crime charged and to be confronted with the witnesses, and to have witness and counsel for himself, the general right of trial by jury, excessive bail not to be required, and the reservation to the people and to the States of the powers not delegated to the United States. These were the rights secured to us by the amendments. Would any one of us to-day sacrifice any one of them? Was the fight of George Clinton to secure them a worthless fight? To him and to those who stood by him, we stand to-day indebted for those words which secure to us our liberties as American citizens.

With the ratification of the Constitution of the United States by eleven of the thirteen States, a new era opened. Though in some respects the States remained sovereign, yet in other respects the United States had become a nation, and had taken her place among the nations of the earth. How far beyond the conception of any of those who had part in that movement has been its development to the position of a world power which it occupies.

Clinton was re-elected Governor of New York from 1777 to 1795, six consecutive terms of three years each, and again in 1801 for a further term of three years, and he served the State as its Chief Magistrate in all for twenty-one years, a record never equaled in this country. Three times he was chosen without an opponent. In 1783 he was elected over General Schuyler, in 1789 over Robert Yates, in 1792 over John Jay, and in 1801 over General Stephen Rensselaer—each certainly a most formidable opponent, but in each count the result showed the hold he had upon the respect and confidence of the people of this great State.

It is not our purpose to call to mind at this time, more than has already been done, his great and patriotic services to the State. Let it be added, however, that in a very large sense it is to him belongs the honor of having conceived the idea of the great inland artificial waterways that have been so much to the commerce of this State, and during his administration as Governor, in 1792, the first legislative act to that end was passed, being the act for subscription and issue of stock for the Western and Northern Inland Navigation Company. In his early boyhood campaigns as a young soldier Clinton had acquired



personal knowledge of the feasibility of connecting Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, and the Hudson River with Lake Ontario by the Mohawk River and Lake Oneida. These waterways he as Governor actually proposed. It was he who conceived the idea of those mighty waterways. It was left to his nephew, DeWitt Clinton, to complete and enlarge the conception in the Erie Canal, which connected the Hudson, not with Lake Ontario, but still further west with Lake Erie.

It was in the incumbency of Clinton as Governor that a far-seeing interest in public education gave birth to its supervision by the State in the establishment of the University of the State of New York, with its Board of Regents of the University. The act was passed May 1, 1794 and George Clinton became the first of the Chancellors of the University, in a line which to this time has continued, and has contained the names of those who for learning and high character have reflected honor and credit on the State.

It remains to call brief attention to the national repute of Clinton. He became as we have seen the intimate friend of Washington, and as such became well known outside of his own State. His determined fight for amendment to the Constitution of the United States won him strong regard and respect among the people of other States. The Constitution as it existed provided that each elector should vote for two candidates for President and not for any for Vice-President. General Washington was unanimously elected President, receiving the vote of every Elector, but for the office of President Clinton received votes in the Electoral Colleges in 1789, in 1792 and in 1796 and again in 1804. In 1800 no electoral votes were cast for him, but in 1804 the manner of voting by the Electors having been changed, Clinton was elected Vice-President of the United States, having also 6 votes for President, and in 1808 he was again elected to the same office.

It is difficult at this distance of time to measure the influence of Clinton in the national affairs of that period. During his first term as Vice-President, the Presidential office was filled by Jefferson, that colossal figure in American politics, and in his second term James Madison was President. Those were not by any means quiet times. The trouble was brewing that resulted in the Second War of Independence, the War of 1812. The threat as

understood and published by Adams, was made, which was in fact a threat of nullification and of secession of New England.<sup>1</sup> It was a trouble fomented by the Federalists, the very party which had been at the framing of the Constitution most strongly determined on a strong central government.

To be Vice-President, seems in our history to have almost always been fatal to the future of the unlucky man. True, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Van Buren, each of whom was chosen Vice-President, afterwards reached the Presidential office by election to it, but they three are the only ones out of the whole list of twenty-five, and with those three names the list has ended, and of those five who reached it because of succession on the death of the President during the term, not one of them has ever been elected President. Had George Clinton lived longer, his great and wide popularity might have added his name to the list of Presidents, but he died in office as Vice-President, in the Spring of the last year of his second term and before the candidates were nominated for the next succeeding election. To be Vice-President also seems to be the eclipse for a time of great personal usefulness. The office seems to separate the incumbent from all active participation in the great events as they pass, for he is perforce a calm observer only, having no hand in them, in fact, relegated to comparative obscurity. A mere presiding officer of the Senate with no other duties, powers or privileges, he is relegated to a life of uninteresting routine, and as the years go by it becomes more so.

Clinton died at Washington, April 20, 1812. It was before the time of railroads or the telegraph. Transportation was slow and wearisome and by stage-coach. Had railroads then existed no doubt his remains would have been brought to his native State, the State he loved and served so well and which had so appreciated and honored him, and would have rested in the soil of New York. As it was he was buried in the old Congressional Cemetery at Washington at the end of a long line of graves in which repose all that was mortal of the great and worthy and honored men who there found a last resting place.

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1. The fact was denied, but it remains that it was asserted by John Quincy Adams, and it is inconceivable that he should have manufactured a lie. The violence of the times was such that it was charged that Adams had no ground for the charge and that he was paid for what he did by a foreign mission.

He was a unique character. His official history is by far the most honorable of any of the sons of New York. He was most certainly a man of the people. He was a brave, resourceful and persistent soldier, who was most modest, depreciating his own qualities, most considerate of others and supremely trusted by the great commander. He was a patriot of the truest type, and every act of his sprang from the sincere love of his country. He was a statesman far seeing, conscientious and courageous. A leader and not a follower. As an official, it can be said of him, in the language of the days now passing, he esteemed every place in which the people placed him, a public trust.

New York may well remain proud of the memory of her first Governor.

















